

REMARKS

Claims 17, 18 and 25-29 are pending in the present application. Claims 17 and 27 have been amended. Claims 19, 21 and 30-33 have been canceled.

Claim Objections

Claim 27 has been objected to in view of the informalities stated on page 2 of the current Office Action dated March 21, 2003. Claim 27 has been amended as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this objection.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. 103

Claim 17, 18 and 25-29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Carey et al. reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,075,965) in view of the Thomas et al. reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,000,818) and the Pang reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,177,329). Also, claims 19, 21 and 31-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Carey et al. reference in view of the Thomas et al. reference and the Pang reference, in further view of the Stevens reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,376,374).

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant respectfully notes the Examiner's acknowledgment that claim 30 has been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Although Applicant does not necessarily concede that the above noted rejections are proper, claim 17 has been amended to include the features of claim 30, to advance prosecution of this application.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge that claims 17, 18 and 25-29 are allowed.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 has been amended merely to include the features of dependent claim 30. Accordingly, claim 17 as currently pending corresponds to claim 30 as previously examined. Also, claim 27 has been amended merely responsive to the claim objection. Accordingly, the above noted amendments have not been made to further distinguish the claims over the prior art as relied upon by the Examiner. Thus, the amendments should not be construed as narrowing scope within the meaning of *Festo*.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to enter the above noted amendments, which merely place the claims in condition for allowance in view of the Examiner's acknowledgment of allowable subject matter. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the corresponding rejections, and to pass the claims of the

present application to issue, for at least the above reasons.

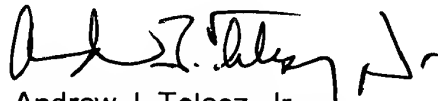
In the event that there are any outstanding matters remaining in the present application, please contact Andrew J. Telesz, Jr. (Reg. No. 33,581) at (703) 715-0870 in the Washington, D.C. area, to discuss these matters.

Pursuant to the provisions of 37 C.F.R. 1.17 and 1.136(a), the Applicant hereby petitions for an extension of one (1) month to July 21, 2003, for the period in which to file a response to the outstanding Office Action. The required fee of \$110.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0238 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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